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CHP GEARS UP FOR MAXIMUM ENFORCEMENT OVER MEMORIAL HOLIDAY

SACRAMENTO - The California Highway Patrol (CHP) is urging drivers to stay alert, be patient and buckle up over the Memorial Day weekend. The CHP is gearing up for the first official summer holiday with a maximum enforcement effort. Every available officer will be patrolling California's roads and highways looking for impaired and aggressive drivers.

"The three-day Memorial Day weekend is the traditional starting point for the summer driving period," CHP Commissioner Dwight "Spike" Helmick said today. "With rotating power outages predicted for the summer season, motorists must be particularly alert to potential driving hazards, including non-functioning traffic lights."

Officers will also be on the lookout for motorists who are not wearing safety belts or have unrestrained passengers. "Start every trip by buckling up," Helmick said. "Many people believe they only need a safety belt when driving on the freeway. Some of the deadliest collisions occur on surface streets with cross traffic. Buckling up is your best protection against severe injury or death in a collision." Make sure everybody else in the vehicle is buckled up as well, especially child passengers who belong in a safety seat, Helmick advised. Motorists are reminded to use 1-800-Tell CHP to report motorists transporting children unrestrained.

"We are very concerned about the number of children who are riding unrestrained or in improperly installed safety seats," said Helmick. To assist parents with the challenge of properly installing their child's safety seat, the CHP has trained over 200 officers to serve as child safety seat inspectors. Every local CHP office is a designated child safety seat fitting station and has

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someone available to inspect child safety seats and instruct motorists in their proper installation.

Helmick noted that there were 24 fatalities during last year's Memorial Day weekend. "More than half of the fatalities in CHP jurisdiction were not buckled up," he said. "The tragedy is that many of those people would probably be alive today if they were wearing a safety belt."

The CHP also reminded motorists not to get behind the wheel if they've been drinking, and don't get into a vehicle if the driver has been drinking. Alcohol may impair judgment and reflexes long before the motorist feels its effects. This is especially true when alcohol is combined with hot summer days.

The commissioner also cautioned those planning to travel to the beach, mountains or other popular holiday spots to start early, allow extra time for the additional traffic and avoid driving long distances without proper rest.

Media Note: The Maximum Enforcement Period (MEP) begins at 6:01 p.m. on Friday, May 25, and continues until midnight Monday, May 28. Motorists interested in having their child safety seat inspected should contact their local CHP office listed in the government pages of their phone book.

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